

THE  
*Cottage Piper;*  
OR  
HISTORY  
OF  
**EDGAR,**  
*The Itinerant Musician.*

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THE

(CW)

COTTAGE PIPER;

OR

HISTORY

OF

EDGAR,

*The Itinerant Musician;*

AN INSTRUCTIVE TALE.

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Ornamented with Cuts.

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*Price Two-Pence.*

COTLER PIPER

WISCONSIN

H. D. G. A. R.

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THE  
Cottage Piper.

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HOW pleasant is the view of rural scenes! From the lofty summit of the Mountains which overlook the Vale of Lucca, in Savoy, an English gentleman whose name was Herbert, being on his travels, was taking a contemplative view of the natural beauties that surrounded him.

At about half a mile down the hill, Mr. Herbert saw a hamlet, where he doubted not but he should be able to procure lodging for that night

Free from the inquietudes of the busy world, his mind was employed in contemplation, while his eyes rambled

from one object to another of this spacious and unbounded view. Soon, however, the evening song of the feathered choristers admonished him to think of the approaching night.

The sun began to sink beneath the mountain, the twilight now began to veil it with a shade, while every step he took grew browner, till the moon dispelled this gloomy darkness with her placid light, though less glorious than the sun's, which had so lately sunk from the view of the inhabitants of those regions.

Mr. Herbert was so struck with this enchanting scene, that he sat down for a few moments to contemplate it.—Throughout this vast expanse, nothing intercepted or broke off his view : and his eyes rambled at leisure, as far as they could, over this vast prospect. The air, which was fresh, was undisturbed by the slightest breeze, and all nature was sunk into universal silence, except the low murmuring of a stream,



which meandered through the country at some distance.

Mr. H. now stretched on the grass, might perhaps have continued there till the next morning, but that the music of a lute, accompanied by an enchanting voice, soon struck his ear. He turned to the side from which the music proceeded, and through the darksome verdure of the trees at no great distance, discovered the white walls and garden paling of a cottage.

He instantly turned his steps that way with a beating heart; and great indeed was his surprise, when he beheld a youthful peasant playing on a lute in admirable strains. A woman, who was seated on the right hand, looked on him with an eye of the most tender affection. At their feet sat upon the turf several children, both boys and girls, and also people of different ages, who were all paying the greatest attention to the harmony of his sounds.

As soon as Mr. Herbert made his



appearance, several of the children went to meet him, looked at one another, and enquired among themselves who this strange gentleman was. The young musician turned about to look at him, but did not cease to play. I shall tell the remainder of this story as related by Mr. Herbert.

I could not (says he) withstand the first emotions of my heart. I held out my hand to him, and he gave me his, which I took hold of in a kind of ecstasy. Upon this the whole company rose from their seats, and enclosed us in a kind of circle. I told them, in as few words as possible, the reason of my coming into that part of the country, and especially at such an unusual hour for travellers to visit them.

The young peasant observed to me, that there was no inn within many miles of that place, as their cottage was not near the road. He told me however, that if I could be contented with a cottage and poor people, they would do their best to accommodate me.

His performance on the lute, and his just taste in singing, had at first considerably raised my admiration and astonishment; but I was now much more surprised at the politeness of his manners, the accuracy of his language, and the fluency of his speech. I told him I was sure he was not born in a cottage. "Pardon me, Sir, (said he) I was born in the cottage you see; but I fancy you are fatigued. Marcus, bring a chair; I hope you will excuse me, Sir, for I every evening entertain my neighbours in this manner."

I could not think of making use of the chair, but laid myself on the grass, as all the rest did. By this time every one had resumed their former posture, and the silence I had been the cause of interrupting, by this unexpected visit, again took place.

After a few minutes silence, the whole of the company arose, and wished each other a good night, and all went home, leaving the old man, who sat in a chair

next the door, and whom I had not before observed; the rural musician, with the woman sitting by him; Marcus, the boy, and myself.

Soon after I got up, and drawing nearer to the musical youth, put out my hand to him. How delightful, (said I) it is to meet with people who attract us at the first interview, and in a few minutes fix our esteem. He made no answer but gently grasped my hand.

My dear sir, (said the old man) you seem to be well pleased with the evening's entertainment. I am happy to find you have conceived a friendship for my son Edgar, and on that account my bed shall be at your service. No, father, (said Marcus) who came running from the barn, I have been littering for myself some straw, and if you please the gentleman shall lie in my bed. I was obliged to promise to accept of this offer, and could not help observing how busy the little fellow had been in making up his bed.

Marcus then held out his hand, and the old man rested on his shoulder, and went into the cottage, having first wished me a good night. I was now left with Edgar and the young woman, who I soon found was his wife. I asked them to indulge me with half an hour's conversation, as it was moonlight. Matilda readily consented, and seemed pleased at the attention I paid to her husband; who seeing how it pleased her, assented to my proposal.

My friends, (said I, taking the woman by the hand) pray inform me how long you have enjoyed your present happiness?—She replied, these six months; and now it is more than a year since my dear Edgar returned from his travels.

You have been a traveller then (said I) Yes, sir, (answered Edgar) I have visited a part of Europe. Every thing about you, and every thing you say, (interrupted I) excites in me a deal of astonishment. If you have no secret

motive for concealing the transactions of your life, I should be very happy to hear you relate them.—Certainly said Matilda to Edgar, with a smile, you cannot refuse it, as you are very sensible it is always with pleasure I hear it, and this gentleman appears deserving the favour.

‘Edgar, smiling, consented to our request. I will relate the story as nearly as my memory will permit, as he told it.

I was born in this cottage, and am now about twenty three years of age. I had the misfortune to lose my mother in my infancy. Though my father’s circumstances were not affluent, yet they were above want: being forced into a law suit, he was ruined; and his paternal cottage being torn from him, he died with grief. The old man you just now saw, who is become my father, bought it immediately, and came and settled in it. Seeing me an orphan at so early a period of life, he took pity on

me, and told me I should be his shepherd, and intrusted me with the care of his flock.

He treated me in the tenderest manner, and his children behaved to me as they would to a brother.

One evening, as I was sitting on the summit of a mountain, and amusing myself by singing, I observed a man among the trees, who came up to me and enquired how far he was from the public road. Very far, sir, said I to him; more than five miles. He asked me if I could conduct him thither; which I told him I would with pleasure, were it not for my flock, which I dared not leave. It is possible, (continued he) that your parents will make a shift to procure me a lodging for the night. I told him that my parents once lived honestly upon earth; but were now happy in heaven.

The particular tone which sorrow gave to my voice, (as he afterwards informed me) and the answer which I

returned to every question he put to me, interested him much in my favour.

As night hastily approached, I conducted him to our cottage, and my master entertained him in an hospitable manner. The next day they had some discourse together concerning me, and when I was preparing to resume my daily charge, I was told that Marcus would in future take it, as the gentleman intended to take me with him.

I could not leave my situation without shedding tears; and it was impossible to unravel the roll of fate, and therefore I could not foresee that to this generous man, whose name was Le Roe, (but who is since dead) I should be indebted for all my present happiness. He was organist to a small parish, and a man of the best abilities. He had received, from the care and attention of his father, a very liberal education.

When I went to live with him he was about forty years of age. He instructed





me in reading and writing, and afterwards took pleasure in the improvement of my voice, and taught me to play the lute. He also provided for me the works of the most celebrated Poets. Thus kindly he treated me for five years, during which time, even in the enjoyment of all these pleasures, the recollection of my cottage, and the lovely countenance of my dear Matilda, were never banished from my mind ; and one morning, as I was walking with my worthy patron, he brought forward the circumstance of our first meeting, by saying, Dear Edgar, I have fulfilled that duty, which I thought Providence had imposed upon me when I first saw you. I am sensible what are your feelings when you reflect on the habitation from whence I took you. My only wish was to protect and educate you, in hope that you might at last become master of it. There it lies before you, but, on pain of my displeasure, return not thither, till you are able to purchase

it. Here, take my lute, in the proper use of which I have instructed you, and travel with it, and as you have an excellent voice, be not afraid of being called an itinerant musician, as whenever people hear it, you will be caressed as the first artist in your line; but be discreet and frugal with what you thus obtain, and when you have gained enough, return to your favourite spot, and purchase the cottage of your ancestors.

The next day I took leave of my benevolent friend, and in the course of four years, I travelled through all Italy, France, and part of Germany, dressed like a peasant of the mountains, with my hair hanging in curls upon my shoulders. I verily believe that very few noblemen ever travelled with greater pleasure than I did; for wherever I went I met with a hearty welcome.—The nobility formed concerts, on purpose to hear me.

Every mountain I went over, or even saw, I sought this hamlet, and at times imagined I saw my cottage. With my mind full of the image of lovely Matilda and my cottage, I frequently sung verses which I had composed.

Having taken up my abode for some time at Turin, after travelling twice from one extremity to the other, I sat down and counted over my riches, imagining my fortune was sufficient to enable me to visit my native place. I accordingly set out, and in ten days reached the city in which my generous benefactor had resided, where I was informed that he had been dead two months: I went and shed tears on his grave, and vowed that should I ever be so happy as to become a father, I would call my first boy by his name. That evening I reached this place, and had the pleasure to hear every one speak favourably of me, for I was so much altered that none knew me at first. My

lute, however, and the remembrance of former friendship, soon secured me the affections of Matilda, whom I received from the hands of her father. Having obtained his consent, I purchased the cottage, and the field belonging to it, for two hundred crowns, with which his eldest son bought a farm at a small distance.

The good old man and Marcus live with us, and teach me the art of agriculture. In this happy situation, I wish to follow the example of my father, by being a good husband, a tender parent, and a virtuous peasant; still keeping my lute by my side, and often playing upon it to amuse myself, my family, and my neighbours.

When Edgar had thus got through his tale, he stopped short; but still my mind was so captivated by his narrative, that I fancied I heard him speak. His animated and open countenance, the generous gratitude that glowed in his bosom, his travels and singular fortune,

and indeed every thing seemed to conspire to represent this young man superior to the common men. I did not awake from this kind of dream till Matilda, leaning forwards, embraced Edgar, which roused me from my contemplation. We then embraced each other, and retired to the cottage, where order, decency, and propriety, appeared in every respect, and sat down to a plentiful repast of such fruits as the mountain afforded. Marcus then conducted me to a niche in one of the apartments; it was indeed narrow, but the bed within it was sweet and clean. The lad told me it was his bed, which he cheerfully resigned for my accommodation. I soon fell asleep, and after enjoying a good night's rest, arose, and remained the following day there, during which Edgar entertained me by relating many curious matters that occurred in the course of his journey; and I am sure I could have passed the remainder of my days with them in happiness.

Happy then, said I to myself, who live contented in such a situation! Here let me continue! But why indulge such ideas, since this very night I must leave them. I felt a pang of sadness, and I supposed, from their looks, it gave them some concern, when we parted.



*Marsden, Printer, Chelmsford.*



